

## ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 16: Gyan Bohit (Boat of Wisdom)

'Gyan Bohit', 'Boat of Wisdom', presents Guru Nanak's compelling paradigms in the land of 'Bhrighu' to deal with unfavorable situations through practical solutions. It also encompasses the memories of Saints who had overlaying viewpoints as Guru Nanak.

paun guroo paanee pit jaataa ||  
audhar sa(n)jogee dharatee maataa ||  
rain dhinas dhui dhaiee dhaiaa jag khelai khelaiee he ||  
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Air is deemed as the teacher, water as the father.  
Earth as the nourishing womb of the mother.

Night and day are the female and male nurses who make the creation play the worldly game.  
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak emphasized the importance of sustaining natural resources. As an environmentalist, he compared human relationships with elements of nature. For example, air, vital for our physical being, is equated with a teacher who is important for our spiritual existence. Water, a sustainer of life, is compared to a father who is a provider. Similarly, as earth bestows nourishment, it is likened to the womb of a mother which nurtures.

From Daulatabad, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled northwards to Bharuch, Parbhas Patan, Junagadh, Ahmedabad, Ujjain and reached Chittorgarh. From Daulatabad, they first travelled to the city of Bharuch.

In trailing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Daulatabad to Bharuch.

Bharuch is a city in the present day Indian state of Gujarat. It is an ancient town situated in the region where the Narmada River merges with the Arabian Sea. Bharuch was a ship building center and an important sea port for trade, dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Narmada is one of the seven Holy Rivers of the Indian subcontinent; the other six being the Ganga, Yamuna, Sindhu, Godavari, Kaveri and the extinct Saraswati. Hindus believe that a dip in any one of these seven rivers washes away one's sins.

Along the banks of the River Narmada, we first visit the 'Bhrighu Rishi Temple', an ancient site dedicated to Bhrighu Rishi, from whom the city of Bharuch gets its name, is known to be one of the 'Sapt Rishis'; the seven sages of primeval India. Bhrighu Rishi is known for his manuscripts on 'Brahma Chinta Parnali' which include the wisdom of five supreme

sciences; predictive astrology being one of these sciences. Bhrihu Rishi is famous for his text, 'Bhrihu Samhita'.

**Dharmesh Bhai Satish Bhai:** Bharuch was earlier known as Bhrihu Kutch. Later it was named Bharuch. Bhrihu Rishi himself established Bharuch. He wrote 'Bhrihu Samhita'.

As Bharuch was an important centre of Hindu pilgrimage, Guru Nanak visited the city to engage with spiritualists.

On the banks of the River Narmada, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana were approached by a 'Sanyasin', a lady hermit who sought advice on how to attune her mind with the divinity of the Omnipresent. In reply Guru Nanak sang,

naa man marai na kaaraj hoi ||  
man vas dhootaa dhuramat dhoi ||  
man maanai gur te ik hoi ||  
niragun raam guneh vas hoi ||  
aap nivaar beechaare soi ||  
(Raag Gauri Guareri, Guru Nanak)

Unless negativity of the mind does not cease, positive pursuits can't be accomplished.  
Mind influenced by duality becomes evil intended.

When the mind understands spiritual wisdom, it becomes one with consciousness.  
The formless Omnipresent's attributes are present in all forms of creation.  
By shedding self-conceit, one can practice self-contemplation.  
(Raag Gauri Guareri, Guru Nanak)

Even though peace is desired universally, yet unrest is witnessed all around. The mind controls human emotions. When identification with the mind is overcome, emotions emerging from it are dissolved. What then remains is purity of thought. Guru Nanak says, where there is purity of thoughts and intentions, there is peace.

Tara Singh Narotam in his book 'Gur Tirath Sangrah' has written in 1884 that a site by the name of 'Nanak Wadi' (Nanak's Garden) was established by the 'Udasin' (ascetic) community to commemorate Guru Nanak's visit to Bharuch. Mahant Narbada Das was a well-known 'Udasin' (ascetic) saint of this shrine. This site was located near the present Bharuch Railway Station. It ceased to exist after the British Government acquired the land in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1988, Gurdwara Chadar Sahib was built on the banks of the River Narmada by the Sikh community to commemorate Guru Nanak's visit.

**Amardeep Singh:** Bharuch, on the banks of River Narmada, is a settlement since the times of antiquity. This gurdwara is a memory of Guru Nanak's visit to this town.

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According to the narrative written on the information board at this site, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana reached the banks of the River Narmada in the night. When the boatmen refused to ferry them in the dark, Guru Nanak spread a sheet on the river on which they floated to cross the river. This incident does not find mention in the earliest 'Janamsakhi' texts.

During our travels on Guru Nanak's footsteps, we have come across many narratives which seem to have been created to attract naive masses. Personally, when I read Guru Nanak's verses they give me insight and strength to deal with unfavorable situations by providing practical solutions. I find that his words are a touchstone which validate his pragmatic philosophy.

Speaking metaphorically, Guru Nanak compares wisdom to a boat which is a mode for passengers to traverse the river of adversity.

gur pauRee beRee guroo gur tulahaa har naau ||  
gur sar saagar bohitho gur teerath dhareeaau ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Spiritual wisdom is the boarding ladder. Spiritual wisdom is the boat. Spiritual wisdom is the raft and the inner reflection.

Spiritual wisdom is the pool, the ocean and the ship. Spiritual wisdom is the sacred pilgrimage. Spiritual wisdom is the holy river.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

From Bharuch, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana took a boat on the Narmada River and sailing through the Arabian Sea, they reached Prabhas Patan.

Trailing in Guru Nanak's footsteps, from Bharuch, we travel by road to Prabhas Patan.

The port city of Prabhas Patan has been famous for ship building for centuries. It is also known as Somnath Patan, named after the historic Somnath temple.

**Amardeep Singh:** The town of Prabhas was a port when Guru Nanak visited the Somnath Temple, which is attributed to 'Som', the moon, 'Shiva' and the confluence of the three rivers.

We visit the Somnath Temple, the famous Hindu pilgrimage centre. This site is associated with the belief that when the luminosity of the moon waned to a point of extinction, it was energised by Shiva such that it transitioned through the phases of crescent moon, half-moon and finally, it regained its brightness as a full moon. In Indic traditions, the moon represents the human mind, and hence its waning and waxing states are a reflection of the changing states of human emotions.

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The Somnath Temple is one of the twelve main 'Jyotirlinga' sites across India, representing different manifestations of Shiva.

At Prabhas Patan, the Triveni Ghat overlooks the Triveni Sangam, a confluence at the Arabian sea of the three rivers Hiran, Kapila and the mythical non-existent Saraswati.

In the Hindu tradition, this confluence is believed to be sacred as these rivers flow into their ultimate destination, the sea, which symbolizes the convergence of birth, life and death. People visit this site to perform religious rituals and to bathe so as to wash away their sins.

At one of the temples in Prabhas Patan, I saw a dog sitting at the steps of a temple with its gaze focused on the sanctum sanctorum. To the human, the characteristics of a dog express some important traits, such as loyalty and unconditional love for one's master. The sitting dog brought to mind a verse of Guru Nanak in which he uses the metaphor of a dog to remind us that dedication and loyalty to Omnipresent is displayed by keeping daily guard against actions which over time become ritualistic practices.

ete kookar hau begaanaa bhaukaa is tan taiee ||  
bhagat heen naanak je hoigaa taa khasamai naau na jaiee ||  
(Raag Bilawal, Guru Nanak)

Amongst many dogs, the one with an ego is an outcast. It barks under the control of its body.

Even in a troubled state of mind, Nanak says, contemplation on the virtues should not be forgotten.

(Raag Bilawal, Guru Nanak)

From Prabhas Patan, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled by foot to Junagadh.

Trailing in Guru Nanak's footsteps, from Prabhas Patan, we travel to Junagadh.

**Amardeep Singh:** Junagadh, the city in the foothills of Girnar Hills has many old mosques, Buddhist caves, Jain and Hindu temples, which reveal of its rich religious and cultural past.

Girnar is home to one of the ancient rocks upon which is inscribed edicts propagating the Buddha's 'Dharma', the path of righteousness, peace and harmony. This edict was installed by Emperor Ashoka in 250 BC after he witnessed a colossal loss of human lives in the Battle of Kalinga, and thereafter adopted Buddhism. He dedicated his life to spreading Lord Buddha's message of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) and installed such rock edicts in prominent locations across present day Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

In the vicinity of the Uparkot Fort, the influence of monastic Buddhist and Jain traditions are visible in the remains of the 1<sup>st</sup> century caves which were carved out of rocks and had served as residential quarters for the monks.

During Guru Nanak's visit, this region was known as 'Sorath Desh', named after Queen Sorath, one of the seven fabled heroic women of Sindh. She is known for sacrificing her life as a testament for her love for her husband, King Rai Diyatch of Junagarh. It is believed that in the Indian musical system, the musical measure of 'Raag Sorath' was inspired by Queen Sorath's attributes. This raag evokes an intense desire to act upon one's strong convictions.

Guru Nanak conscientiously incorporated regional folklore and moral stories to deliver his profound messages so that the local people could easily relate with their essence. At Girnar Hills, Guru Nanak sang a verse in Raag Sorath.

soraTh sadhaa suhaavane je sachaa man hoi ||  
dha(n)dhee mail na kat man jeebhai sachaa soi ||  
sasurai peieeai bhai vasee satigur sev nisa(n)g ||  
parahar kapaR je pir milai khusee raavai pir sa(n)g ||  
(Raag Sorath, Guru Nanak)

'Sorath' (spirit of conviction) is forever soothing, only if the Truth abides in the heart.  
The speech is harmonious, the mind does not have the duality and speaks with honesty.

Overcomes the fear residing within and without hesitation, acquires wisdom.  
Discards materialistic attachments, unites with spiritual awareness. Remains in bliss with Divinity.  
(Raag Sorath, Guru Nanak)

When the purity of speech and non-duality resides in the heart, the mind is in conviction to be on the path of truth.

On reaching Junagadh, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana proceeded to the Girnar Hills.

We now visit the Girnar Hills which are located about four kilometres from the city of Junagadh.

**Amardeep Singh:** 9999 steps lead to the ancient sites on top of the Girnar Hills. At the time of Guru Nanak's travels and even in present times, these are important sites for pilgrimage.

These ancient historic sites belong to the religious traditions of Jainism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism. Since ancient times people associated with different religious traditions have been visiting the Girnar Hills.

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Even in present times, 'Aghoris', the non-conventionalists and 'Nanga Sadhus', the naked ascetics, in addition to adherents of many other traditions, continue to congregate on these hills.

During the time of Guru Nanak's visit, the Girnar Hills were an important center for the followers of Guru Dattatreya, who lived centuries before Guru Nanak.

In the 'Janamsakhi' artworks, Guru Nanak's visit to the Girnar Hills is often depicted as a meeting with a reclining sage, a symbolic representation of Guru Dattatreya, who is considered as a master of 'Tantra', the esoteric magical practices.

Tara Singh Narotam, in his book 'Gur Tirath Sangrah' written in 1884, notes that Gurdwara Charanpaduka existed in Junagadh to commemorate Guru Nanak's visit. The site has now ceased to exist. It is said to have been built by the almost extinct 'Suthra Shahi' community of mendicants aligned with Suthra Shah, a disciple of Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru.

Junagadh is home to a large Sindhi community, which has built many places of worship in the memory of Guru Nanak.

**Amardeep Singh:** This gurdwara in Junagadh is made by the Sindhi community who migrated here from Pakistan.

We took this opportunity to visit a Sindhi family who maintain a gurdwara within the precincts of their house in Junagadh.

**Amardeep Singh:** This is the oldest gurdwara in Junagadh at Circle Chowk which has been built by the Sindhi community in memory of Guru Nanak's visit to this city.

From Junagadh we make a detour from Guru Nanak's trail to visit Dwarka in order to trace memories of Bhagat Pipa, a Saint whose philosophy was aligned with that of Guru Nanak's.

Bhagat Pipa spent the majority of his life in Dwarka, a port city in the state of Gujarat. The ancient Dwarkadhish Temple at Dwarka is an important Hindu pilgrimage associated with the deity Krishna.

Bhagat Pipa was born in the year 1425 AD to a royal Rajput family of Gagaron village in Rajasthan. Though enjoying all the pleasures and comforts of royal life, Bhagat Pipa yearned for spiritual knowledge. During a visit to Varanasi, he sought acceptance from Bhagat Ramanand to become his Guru. Bhagat Ramanand refused to accept him as his disciple till he discarded the ego accompanying worldly position. As such, the distinction

of high and low could be obliterated. Accordingly, Bhagat Pipa renounced his royalty and walked the path of spirituality.

Epitomising humility, Bhagat Pipa and his wife travelled the country to serve common people. He sang hymns composed by him to earn proceeds, which would then be distributed amongst the poor.

At Dwarka, after having made a considerable effort to find a physical site associated with Bhagat Pipa, we discovered a small shrine just behind the iconic Dwarkadhish Temple.

**Diaya Lal Haridas:** It is written in the book named 'Bhagat Maal' that Bhagat Pipa Ji belonged to Pipawao village. Pipa Ji is the Guru of the tailoring community. In this temple, Pipa Ji's idol was earlier made in clay.

Bhagat Pipa, one of the Saints of the Bhakti movement, was a contemporary of Guru Nanak. There is no evidence that Guru Nanak and Bhagat Pipa met in person. However, his verse is enshrined in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, as an indication that their philosophy of Monism, the Oneness of Creation, overlapped.

kaiaa bahu kha(n)dd khojate nav nidh paiee ||  
naa kachh aaibo naa kachh jaibo raam kee dhuhaiiee ||  
jo brahama(n)dde soiee pi(n)dde jo khojai so paavai ||  
peepaa pranavai param tat hai satigur hoi lakhaavai ||  
(Raag Dhanasri, Bhagat Pipa)

I have searched many regions, but it is within the body that I found the nine treasures.  
No coming and no going. I seek this grace from the Omnipresent.

What manifests in the universe is also in the body. Those who seek awareness are  
graced with it.

Pipa says, this Truth is the supreme essence revealed through the guidance of the true  
teacher.

(Raag Dhanasri, Bhagat Pipa)

Bhagat Pipa says that the entire universe is a manifestation of the one Supreme Power.

From Junagadh, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled by foot to Ahmedabad.

After having made a detour to Dwarka, we resume our journey in the footsteps of Guru Nanak from Junagadh to Ahmedabad.

Ahmedabad, situated on the banks of the River Sabarmati, is located in the Indian state of Gujarat. Historically ruled by Hindu Kings, it transitioned to the Delhi Sultanate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1411 AD, Sultan Muzaffar Shah named it Ahmedabad.

In Ahmedabad we were unable to find any tangible memory of Guru Nanak's visit. However, the followers of Guru Nanak congregate at the Gurdwara Gobind Dham.

In this city there are mosques that have a distinct blend of Islamic and Hindu architecture. Architectural experts describe these structures as a 'Hindu body with Islamic apparels'.

The workmanship displayed at these sites reminds me of Guru Nanak's words of appreciation for the humble attribute of the Supreme Energy, which remains elusive and does not visibly assert its creativity, even after having created the entire diversity.

jaa tis bhaanaa taa jagat upaiaa ||  
baajh kalaa aaddaan rahaiaa ||  
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Through its will, the universe was created.  
Without physically demonstrating any skills, the cosmic energy sustains the universe.  
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

From Ahmedabad, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Ujjain.

Tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Ahmedabad to Ujjain.

Geographically located at the Tropic of Cancer, Ujjain was earlier known as Avantipura. It has been ruled by two iconic rulers, King Vikramaditya, who is accredited for formulating 'Vikrami Samvat', the Indic calendar system, and his elder brother, King Bharthari Hari, a prominent 'Nath Jogi' (ascetic) figurehead.

**Amardeep Singh:** Ujjain, located on the banks of the River Kshipra was historically a prominent city and continues to be an important place of pilgrimage for the Hindus.

At Ujjain, every twelve years, the 'Kumbh Mela' is held on the banks of the Kshipra River.

We visit the Mahakaleshwar Jotirlinga Temple. This temple is one of the twelve 'Jyotirlinga' sites which symbolically represent different manifestations of Lord Shiva. Pilgrims pay homage at the temple after taking a ritualistic bath at the Kshipra River.

We now visit Gurdwara Guru Nanak Ghat on the banks of the Kshipra River.

**Amardeep Singh:** At Ujjain, Guru Nanak had dialogues with the 'Nath Panthi' (ascetic) followers of Bharthari Hari. This Gurdwara is in remembrance of Guru Nanak's visit to Ujjain.

During the times of Guru Nanak's visit, a large community of 'Nath Jogis' (ascetics), the followers of 'Bharthari Yogi' (ascetics), resided in Ujjain.

On hearing Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana sing on the banks of the Kshipra River, the 'Nath Jogis' (ascetics) approached them to inquire which form of God they revered; why they did not attach importance to religious bathing and what path they followed for spiritual cleansing. In reply Guru Nanak sang,

autar avaghaT saravar n(h)aavai ||  
bakai na bolai har gun gaavai ||  
jal aakaasee su(n)n samaavai ||  
ras sat jhol mahaa ras paavai ||1||  
aaisaa giaan sunahu abh more ||  
bharipur dhaar rahiaa sabh Thaire ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Removing evil intent by taking a bath in the pool of positive intent.  
Refraining from uttering meaningless negative words and engaging in self-reflection.  
Like water remains as vapour in the sky, similarly, remain absorbed in the Truth.  
Churning the essence of honesty, the nectar of the Supreme Truth is obtained.  
Such knowledge should be heard, O my mind.  
The Omnipresent is pervading in all places.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak said that he reveres the force which resides in all forms and cleanses his mind from vices by bathing in the waters of Truth.

We now visit the Bharthari Caves which are located in the outskirts of the city of Ujjain. These caves are named after King Bharthari Hari, who, after renouncing his kingdom, lived here as an ascetic. Later, many manmade caves were built around it by his devotees and the 'Kanphatta Jogis', the split eared ascetics.

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana were invited by the Yogis to stay in their commune for a few days.

The Yogis mentioned that through the practice of fasting, prescribed religious meals and supernatural powers, they had discovered techniques to live a long disease free life.

In response, Guru Nanak sang,

khimaa gahee brat seel sa(n)tokha(n) ||  
rog na biaapai naa jam dhokha(n) ||  
mukat bhe prabh roop na rekha(n) ||  
jogee kau kaisaa ddar hoi ||  
rookh birakh gireh baahar soi ||  
nirabhau jogee nira(n)jan dhiaavai ||

anadhin jaagai sach liv laavai ||  
so jogee merai man bhaavai ||  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Forgiveness is akin to fasting to attain contentment.  
One is not affected by disease or the pain of death.  
Liberated, it is realized that the cosmic energy has no form or feature.  
What fear does the 'Jogi' (enlightened) have?  
The cosmic energy resides in the trees and the plants, within the household and outside  
as well.  
The fearless 'Jogis' (enlightened) meditate on immaculate thoughts.  
Night and day, they remain conscious and aware by embracing honesty.  
Such 'Jogis' (enlightened) are pleasing to my mind.  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak said that he practices fasting through forgiveness and contentment. In the state of liberation, he envisions oneness with all. Abiding by the laws of nature, he remains in union with the force which gives life and death.

The pilgrims visiting the Mahakaleshwar Jotirlinga Temple, in hope of salvation, would also visit Bharthari Caves. Some visitors asked Guru Nanak if there was any better path to achieve salvation than visiting sites of worship. In response, Guru Nanak sang,

adhiaatam karam kare taa saachaa ||  
mukat bhedh kiaa jaanai kaachaa ||  
aaisaa jogee jugat beechaarai ||  
pa(n)ch maar saach ur dhaarai ||  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Those who do deeds to acquire spiritual knowledge are the ones attached to the Truth.  
How can the secret of salvation be known by the ignorant!  
Those are true 'Jogis' (enlightened) who introspect and contemplate.  
They conquer the five vices and enshrine truth in their heart.  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Religious protocols are just concepts created by belief systems. Guru Nanak says seekers who truthfully delve deep within to awaken their consciousness, find the secrets of salvation.

At a short distance from the Bharthari Caves, we visit the memorial of Guru Machindranath, also known as Matsyrendranath, who started the tradition of the 'Nath Yogis' (ascetics). Bharthari Hari was a disciple of Guru Gorakhnath who was one of the notable disciples of Guru Machindranath.

Historically, both, Muslims and Hindus revered Guru Machindranath. This fact about cross community followership of 'Nath Yogis' is also stated on the information board at this memorial. Muslims would refer to him as 'Peer' and the Hindus as 'Guru'.

From Ujjain we make a detour from Guru Nanak's trail to visit Dhunwa Kalan in Rajasthan to explore memories of Bhagat Dhanna, a saint whose philosophy was aligned with that of Guru Nanak's.

mat kar maya ko ahankar ||  
mat kar kaya ko abhiman ||  
kaya gar sey kachi ||  
kaya gar sey kachi ||  
jaisey oas ka moti ||  
jhonka pawan ka lag jaye jhapka ||  
pawan ka lag jaye kaya dhool ho jasi ||

Don't be proud of materialism.  
Don't be proud of your body.  
The body is fragile as mud.  
The body is fragile as mud.  
It is like a dew-drop.  
It will vanish with a blow of wind.  
When the wind touches the body, it will become dust.

At Dhunwa Kalan, a gurdwara and a temple commemorate the life of Bhagat Dhanna.

aisa sakhat tha maharaj ||  
jinka mulko mey naam ||  
jin ghar jhoolta haathi ||

The powerful king.  
The renowned ones.  
The ones with possessions.

Bhagat Dhanna was born in 1415 AD at this village to a humble family of farmers. A noble, simple-hearted person, the accounts of his life mention that as a young child, he seriously took the advice of a Brahmin who gave him a stone and directed him to worship it as the Divine. His pure intentions and deep devotion enabled him to have a glimpse of divinity.

mat kar maya ko ahankar ||  
mat kar kaya ko abhiman ||

Don't be proud of materialism.

Don't be proud of your body.

Even in a simple stone, he saw the unity of the entirety of Creation.

There is no documented evidence that Bhagat Dhanna and Guru Nanak met in person but inclusion of three of his verses in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, indicates that their thoughts were philosophically aligned.

**Jugraj Singh:** Guru Nanak Dev Ji heard the heart-touching verses of Bhagat Dhanna and compiled them. He also collected the verses of many other Saints. From this action of Guru Nanak and the life of Bhagat Dhanna Ji, we understand that the message of various religions is not different. No religion teaches to harbour discrimination. Everyone should coexist with love and harmony.

Both, Guru Nanak and Bhagat Dhanna exhorted the importance of purity of one's actions and exhibiting unwavering faith in the Omnipresent, who provides nourishment for all; even for the tiniest creature residing inside rocks.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow's law of hierarchical needs states that one can only aspire to altruism if one's basic needs are first fulfilled. In humility, Bhagat Dhanna seeks the Provider to take care of his basic needs so that he can peacefully devote himself to the service of others.

gopaal teraa aarataa ||  
jo jan tumaree bhagat kara(n)te tin ke kaaj savaarataa ||  
guoo bhais magau laaveree ||  
eik taajan turee cha(n)geree ||  
ghar kee geehan cha(n)gee ||  
jan dha(n)naa levai ma(n)gee ||  
(Raag Dhanasri, Bhagat Dhanna)

O Cosmic Omnipresent, this is veneration to you.  
Those beings who perform selfless service,  
their endeavours are embellished.  
I seek necessities for sustenance, like a cow and a buffalo.  
A fine 'Turkestani' horse.  
A good spouse.  
Your humble servant Dhanna, seeks these basic necessities.  
(Raag Dhanasri, Bhagat Dhanna)

From Ujjain, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Chittorgarh.

After having made a detour to Dhunwa Kalan, we resume our journey in the footsteps of Guru Nanak from Ujjain to Chittorgarh.

thara ghat mahe gyan ka janjira ||  
sahib suljhaya ||

Within you resides an island of knowledge.  
The Master will unravel it.

At the time Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana visited Chittorgarh, this region was known as Mewar.

ya mun lobhi lalchi rey ||  
ya mun kalu keer ||  
bharam ke jaal chalave rey ||

This mind is egoistic and greedy.  
This mind is blackened with vices.  
It casts a web of doubt.

**Amardeep Singh:** Chittorgarh is the largest Fort complex in India atop a hill. This city is famous for the temple of Mirabai, the celebrated female saint of the Indian 'Bhakti' tradition.

The fort houses several magnificent monuments; some dating back to the times of Guru Nanak. The presence of many historic Jain and Hindu temples inside this fort is a testimony to the spiritual importance of this city amongst people of diverse faiths.

Inside Chittorgarh Fort, there exists only one site associated with Guru Nanak.

It was set up by the members of the 'Udasin' (ascetic) community. With the older generation of the 'Udasin' members, Baba Prabhu Das and Kishan Das having passed away, the shrine is now managed by the family of Ratan Das who are farmers.

**Ratan Das:** My name is Ratan Das. My father's name is Gopi Lal Ji. We live on the hill at the Chamunda Mata Temple & Gurdwara. My grandfather, Guru Kishan Das Ji Udasin, brought the 'Guru Granth Sahib' here from Amritsar in Punjab. He enshrined the 'Guru Granth Sahib' here. Guru Nanak Dev Ji had travelled. His teachings are to help mankind cross the worldly ocean. This was his mission. All that exists is 'Ik Ongkar' (One Omnipresent). There is none else. Respected Guru taught the world to collectively adopt the path of goodness. Walk on the path of truth. Pilgrimages and austerities are all attained in the feet of the Guru and of the parents.

Observing the vast footprint of the co-existence of diverse faiths in the Chittorgarh Fort complex, I reflect on how all belief systems essentially aim at harmonious existence.

bhooddaRai naam visaariaa booddaRai kiaa tis chaaro ||  
gun chodd bikh ladhiaa avagun kaa vanajaaro ||  
(Raag Vadhans, Guru Nanak)

A negative person having forgotten contemplation has drowned spiritually. What can be  
done now?

Forsaking merits, having loaded merchandize of poisonous intentions, has become a  
trader of demerits.

(Raag Vadhans, Guru Nanak)

## Discussion Pointers

### **ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels** **Episode 16: Gyan Bohit (Boat of Wisdom)**

The discussion points offer a compelling framework for examining Guru Nanak's historical journeys through Gujarat and Rajasthan and the profound philosophical wisdom he imparted in these varied contexts. By exploring his interactions with various spiritual traditions and his thoughtful responses to established religious practices, we gain valuable insights into how his messages of oneness, inner truth, and practical spirituality challenged and enriched existing belief systems. These questions encourage critical reflection on Guru Nanak's advocacy for environmental awareness, inner purification, and the universal accessibility of spiritual wisdom. His messages transcended regional and religious boundaries, addressing essential human concerns. Through these exploration points, we can genuinely appreciate how Guru Nanak's journeys disseminated his vital message and fostered meaningful dialogue across traditions. This resulted in a philosophy that remains profoundly relevant for confronting today's issues of religious dogmatism, environmental degradation, and the persistent search for authentic spiritual experience.

#### **Historical Discussion Pointers:**

**1. What was the significance of Guru Nanak's chosen travel route through western India?**

The episode traces Guru Nanak's journey from Daulatabad to Bharuch, Parbhas Patan, Junagadh, Ahmedabad, Ujjain, and Chittorgarh. Each location was historically significant as a trade, religion, or political power centre. Bharuch, for instance, was an ancient town in the region where the Narmada River merges with the Arabian Sea, a shipbuilding centre, and an important seaport for trade, dating back to the 6th century BC. Similarly, Prabhas Patan was famous for shipbuilding for centuries and is known for the historic Somnath temple. How might Guru Nanak have strategically chosen these locations to reach diverse populations with his message? How might Guru Nanak have strategically chosen these locations to reach diverse populations to have meaningful dialogues?

**2. How did ancient pilgrimage sites shape the religious landscape Guru Nanak encountered?**

The text mentions numerous sacred sites across different religious traditions that Guru Nanak visited, including the Bhrighu Rishi Temple in Bharuch, the Somnath Temple in Prabhas Patan, the Girnar Hills with 9999 steps that lead to ancient sites, the Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga Temple in Ujjain, and the Chittorgarh Fort with its Jain and Hindu temples. These places attract pilgrims from various faiths seeking spiritual

enlightenment. What insights can we gain about Guru Nanak's approach to established religious centers by examining his interactions at these sites?

**3. What do Guru Nanak's interactions with ascetic traditions reveal about the religious diversity of 16th century India?**

During his journey, Guru Nanak engaged with various ascetic traditions, including a 'Sanyasin' (lady hermit) in Bharuch and the 'Nath Jogis' (ascetics) at Ujjain who were followers of Bharthari Hari. The episode notes that during the time of Guru Nanak's visit, the Girnar Hills were an important center for the followers of Guru Dattatreya and 'Aghoris', the non-conventionalists and 'Nanga Sadhus', the naked ascetics, in addition to adherents of many other traditions, continue to congregate on these hills. How did these diverse spiritual traditions contribute to the religious landscape of India during Guru Nanak's time?

**4. How have different communities preserved the memory of Guru Nanak's visits to these regions?**

The episode mentions several sites established to commemorate Guru Nanak's visits, 'Nanak Wadi' (Nanak's Garden) in Bharuch established by the 'Udasin' (ascetic) community, Gurdwara Chadar Sahib built in 1988 on the banks of the River Narmada, Gurdwara Charanpaduka that once existed in Junagadh, and gurdwaras built by the Sindh community. What do these commemorative sites tell us about the impact of Guru Nanak's visits on local communities and the spread of his philosophy beyond Punjab?

**5. What historical connections exist between Guru Nanak and other saints of the Bhakti movement?**

The episode explores the philosophical alignment between Guru Nanak and contemporaries like Bhagat Pipa and Bhagat Dhanna, whose verses are included in the Guru Granth Sahib. Though there is no documented evidence that Bhagat Dhanna and Guru Nanak met in person, the inclusion of their writings indicates philosophical alignment. Similarly, with Bhagat Pipa, there is no evidence that Guru Nanak and Bhagat Pipa met in person, yet their shared philosophy of Monism connects them. How did Guru Nanak's recognition of these saints' spiritual insights contribute to a broader spiritual reform movement across northern India?

## **Philosophical Discussion Pointers:**

**1. How does Guru Nanak's environmental consciousness manifest in his philosophy?**

The episode highlights Guru Nanak's emphasis on the importance of preserving natural resources. It quotes a verse in which he compares natural elements to human relationships, stating that air is like a teacher, water is akin to a father, and the earth serves as the nourishing womb of a mother. How does this ecological awareness

reflect a philosophical understanding of humanity's relationship with nature, and how might it inform contemporary environmental ethics?

**2. What is the significance of Guru Nanak's metaphor of wisdom as a boat?**

Guru Nanak uses the metaphor of a boat, which serves as a means for passengers to cross a vast ocean. In his verse, he states that spiritual wisdom is like this boat or raft, allowing individuals to navigate the challenging worldly ocean of adversity through inner reflection. How does this extended metaphor illustrate Guru Nanak's approach to navigating life's challenges through spiritual understanding rather than ritualistic practices?

**3. How does Guru Nanak's response to the Nath Jogis reflect his views on spiritual practices?**

The Yogis in Ujjain claimed that their practices of fasting, adhering to specific religious meals, and tapping into supernatural powers allowed them to discover the secrets to a long, disease-free life. In response, Guru Nanak articulated that the power of forgiveness parallels the discipline of fasting in achieving true contentment. He highlighted that by embracing forgiveness, individuals free themselves from the shackles of disease and the anguish of death. How does this exchange illuminate Guru Nanak's emphasis on inner virtues over external practices for spiritual advancement?

**4. What alternative does Guru Nanak offer to ritual bathing for spiritual purification?**

In Ujjain, when questioned about which form of God he revered, why he saw little value in ritual bathing, and what religious path he advocated for spiritual cleansing, Guru Nanak emphasised inner purification. He advocated for cleansing oneself of evil intentions by immersing in the pool of positive intentions, refraining from speaking meaningless negative words, and engaging in self-reflection. How does this perspective challenge prevailing notions of spiritual purity in religious traditions of his time?

**5. How does Guru Nanak's concept of humility reshape understandings of the divine-human relationship?**

The episode highlights a profound verse by Guru Nanak, emphasizing the divine creativity of an all-pervading force that brought the universe into existence through its sheer will. This cosmic energy not only sustains the universe but does so without flaunting any physical skill. This notion exemplifies a unique form of divine humility; the creative force quietly underlines its power while remaining modest, even after manifesting the incredible diversity of existence. How does this view of humility challenge conventional theological frameworks and influence human approaches to power and achievement?

**6. What is Guru Nanak's perspective on achieving salvation?**

When pilgrims at the Bharthari Caves asked if there was a better path to achieve salvation than visiting places of worship, Guru Nanak emphasized that those who engage in deeds to acquire spiritual knowledge connect to the Truth. He questioned how the ignorant could genuinely understand the secret of salvation. Furthermore, he stated that religious protocols are merely concepts created by belief systems. Guru Nanak highlighted that seekers who sincerely explore their inner selves to awaken their consciousness can discover the secrets of salvation. How does this inward-focused approach to salvation compare with externally-focused religious practices?